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THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 2008

In Today's Papers

Gul Continues Talks in the US  
All papers continue coverage of President Abdullah Gul's first visit to the US as president. A senior American official who was not identified told the Turkish press after the Bush-Gul meeting that military measures alone were not sufficient and a comprehensive solution was needed to resolve the PKK question. "Bush and Gul did not get into the specifics of either amnesty or a comprehensive solution," the official noted. The official said the US encouraged Turkey to seek dialogue with the Iraqi Kurds with an eye to work out a long-term settlement. Papers note that Gul, in contrast, told a gathering at Woodrow Wilson Center that a "political settlement" was not discussed in his talks in the White House. "The PKK camps in northern Iraq are used to stage attacks in Turkey. Do you think that in the US a political solution is possible to the al-Qaeda problem?" Gul said in response to a question at Wilson Center. Gul stressed the ways for seeking a political settlement to the PKK problem were not raised in his recent or earlier meetings with American officials, adding Turkey would never discuss political solutions to the PKK issue. On the other hand, mainstream Vatan and Islamist-oriented Zaman say a "political settlement" was not discussed in the Bush-Gul meeting, however, the sides discussed plans for economic and social reform in the southeast. Mainstream Hurriyet reports US Ambassador to Turkey Ross Wilson denied the "political solution" matter was discussed between Bush and Gul, saying "We don't conduct such talks with Turkey."

In a meeting with Turkish and American businessmen in Washington, Gul called for investments in east and southeast Turkey. Gul also had talks with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen. The Turkish President met later in the day with UNSYG Ban Ki-moon in New York to discuss Cyprus.

Hurriyet, Radikal and Yeni Safak also report that American interest for energy investment opportunities in Turkey is growing. Mentioning Turkish Energy Minister's meeting with American energy

firms, papers cite energy as the new fundamental aspect for future US investment in Turkey.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey's Kurdish Problem, Turkey-US Ties  
Okay Gonensin opined in mainstream Vatan (1/10): "The talk about a comprehensive solution to the Kurdish problem indicates that the US Administration intends to meddle with our internal problems. Evidently, solving the Kurdish problem in Turkey has become an important issue for the US, particularly because of its role in northern Iraq. It is true that Turkey and the northern Iraqi administration will be able to interact and cooperate effectively once the PKK issue is left behind. On the other hand, Turkey should be able to consider its own Kurdish problem as a political and social problem and exert its own efforts to find a solution. Such efforts will improve Turkey's relations with the northern Iraqi administration. Turkey stands at a point where it should think about its own comprehensive solution. There is no need to hear this from others concerning this issue."

Soli Ozel wrote in mainstream Sabah (1/10): "If we look at Turkey as the center of the world, we overlook the dynamics in our region. Ignoring and underestimating external factors makes us blind to our own weaknesses. If Turkey fails to establish a reasonable relationship with the Iraqi Kurds, it will be because of Turkey's own internal political balances. However, the Gul visit to the US was successful, especially because energy cooperation seems to be the major component of bilateral relations in the period ahead. Given the current situation in Iraq, it comes as no surprise that the US wants to improve relations with Turkey. It is very understandable for Washington to put effort into enhancing its ties with Turkey because Turkey is the region's only Muslim, secular,

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capitalist and democratic country. Turkey should be able to observe regional and international developments free from domestically-fed fears."

Al-Qaeda Suspects Arrested in Van  
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report that six of the 38 al-Qaeda linked suspects detained last week in Van have been formerly arrested. Police launched an operation in Van in the face of the Turkish Hizbullah's efforts to regroup and searched some 40 homes and offices last week. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says Ibrahim Sari, the leader of those arrested, was captured in Afghanistan by US forces in 2001. Sari was kept in Guantanamo Bay prison until 2003 before he was handed over to Turkey and later released. Cumhuriyet claims a police report submitted to the last National Security Council (MGK) had warned that the Hizbullah terror organization was working to restructure itself in southeast Turkey. The report says Hizbullah changed tactics, trying to restructure through legal organizations such as "Mustazaf-Der" and "Inzar" magazine. They extended help to 5,000 families during Sacrifice Feast in 2006, and 3,000 families in 2007, according to the report.

Iran Resumes Natural Gas Supply to Turkey  
All papers report that regular natural gas shipments from Iran to Turkey will resume next week, possibly Monday. Iran had said earlier this week that tough winter conditions in Iran caused a decrease in gas shipments to Turkey which also prompted a cease in gas shipments to Greece via Turkey. The Iranian Petroleum Ministry said Iran will gradually increase supply of natural gas to Turkey. Meanwhile, Russia's Gazprom has increased the amount of natural gas sent to Turkey and Greece via the Blue Stream gas pipeline.

Anti-Americanism Dropped to 89% in Turkey  
Sabah and Aksam report that following the recent US-Turkey cooperation, anti-Americanism dropped from 96% to 89%. The chairman of the Turkey-US caucus in parliament, AKP Antalya Deputy Mevlut Cavusoglu, told the visiting US Senators that 'according to an un-named polling company, positive sentiments against the US in Turkey increased from 4% to 9% following the increased intelligence sharing against the PKK'. Separately, the MP noted "378 deputies became members of the Turkey-US caucus in the parliament; 304 from AKP, 41 from MHP, 18 from CHP and two from DTP."

Prominent Alevi Organizations Reject to Attend Iftar Dinner  
Organized by the Ruling AKP

Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Taraf, Star, Vatan: Papers report that Alevi Studies Center President Ali Yildirim said that those who attend the Alevi Iftar dinner organized by AKP deputy Reha Camuroglu would be defamed, in other words, alienated from Alevi society. Reportedly, 12 prominent senior Alevi figures will meet today and hold a press conference. They are expected to highlight the fact that this month is a month of mourning for Alevis and those who plan to attend the dinner will be warned for the last time.

TV Highlights

NTV

Domestic News

- Turkish commando teams have been deployed to strategic points in Gabar, Cudi, Kato Mountains and Bestler Valley area.
- Constitutional Court has given Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP one extra month to submit its defense in the lawsuit for the closure of the party.
- The Prime Ministry affiliated Directorate for Human Rights will release a report on Turkey's human rights record in 2007.

International News

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- President Bush has arrived in Israel at the start of a regional tour to help push forward the Middle East peace process.
- Hillary Clinton won the Democratic primary in New Hampshire, edging out fellow Senator Barack Obama. Arizona Senator John McCain is now the leader of the Republicans after winning in New Hampshire.
- The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has rejected Greek Cypriot objections to a decision to pass property disagreements to a Turkish Cypriot commission formed to help settle property disputes.

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